

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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STANDARD OF LIVING IN KRASNOGORSK

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1. [] no difference between the prices of consumer goods in Krasnogorsk and in Moscow. The Krasnogorsk population reacted very favorably to the first two price cuts (1947 and 1949) effected after 1946, because these measures brought about a substantial improvement in the standard of living there. Popular reaction to the last two price reduction laws (1950 and 1951), while still favorable, was not so strong. The latter price laws had relatively little effect in reducing the prices of basic consumer goods. Furthermore, the prices of some goods frequently rose in 1950-51, after price reductions had been introduced. In other cases, the quality of some goods affected by price reductions deteriorated, so that, in the final analysis, the prices of goods of equal quality remained approximately the same as before.
2. Within the Moscow region, it was generally true that the availability of consumer goods varied inversely with the distance from Moscow. This applied not only to certain luxury items, as might be expected, but also to some standard food products, such as meat and butter. It was equally true, understandably so, that there was a far greater selection of shoes and clothing items in Moscow stores than in Krasnogorsk. The German specialists at Plant No. 393 never

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purchased clothes in Krasnogorsk but always travelled to Moscow where better bargains were to be had. A few articles previously abundant, especially butter and meat, became scarcity items after 1950 in Krasnogorsk.

4. Poor quality textile goods of Soviet manufacture were always available in Krasnogorsk. However, it was noteworthy that the textile products most in demand were goods imported from the satellite countries: Czechoslovakian shoes, Bulgarian cloth, German shoes and cloth. The quality of these goods was uniformly better than Soviet products of comparable prices. These import goods were immediately sold out when placed on sale.

5. [redacted] the Soviet population was satisfied in general with present-day living conditions. Under the influence of government propaganda, they appeared confident that their living standard would continue to increase. This satisfaction was undoubtedly the result of isolation from the Western world. The average Soviet citizen knew nothing of life in Western Europe and thus had no real basis of comparison in judging living conditions at home.

6. [redacted]

several discharged soldiers and soldiers on leave from Germany who described living conditions there in glowing terms. However, [redacted] these impressions were quickly forgotten once a soldier returned home and readjusted himself to Soviet society. Undoubtedly Party officials prevented such individuals from praising living in the West, if they were inclined to do so.

9. A group of approximately 150 Spanish boys and girls, ranging from 14 to 21 years of age, attended a trade school in Krasnogorsk and worked part time at Plant No. 393. The entire group

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was billeted in a single building and was isolated from the Soviet adolescents in training at the plant.

At the end of the Civil War, they had been evacuated with their parents from Barcelona to the Soviet Union. There was no sign of their parents, supposedly followers of the Loyalist regime. They wished to return home to Spain, but they were not yet allowed to do so.

10. A robbery occurred one night in the German living quarters. With the aid of bloodhounds, the militia was able to establish that the thief lived in the dormitory housing the Spanish apprentices. A short time later, the entire group of Spanish youngsters disappeared overnight. No one knew specifically what had happened to them, but anyone who disappears at night in the Soviet Union can only be headed for Siberia.

FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS

11. Most Soviet radio owners were interested in and listened to radio broadcasts from the West. They were particularly concerned that the short-wave reception of their radios be adjusted or improved.

12. Other Soviet radio owners had heard about living conditions in the West from Soviet soldiers who had served in Germany. These soldiers had claimed that every German worker was a capitalist, as they were so well clothed and frequently owned their own houses. These reports aroused the curiosity of many customers. They wished to hear with their own ears about living conditions abroad. These radio owners also mentioned an interest in international affairs as their motive for listening to Western broadcasts. They wished above all to receive any information from the West concerning the possibility of a new world war.

13. Soviet radio owners in the Krasnogorsk area listened primarily to Russian-language broadcasts transmitted from London on the 41- and 31-meter bands at 2200 and 2300 hours Moscow time. These broadcasts were received best. They were either BBC news programs or VOA programs which were relayed by BBC.

Comments:

It is encouraging to note that evidently VOA and BBC programs even have a large listening audience (relative to the number of radio owners) in the Moscow area where jamming is so intense.